The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives news accounts and official interpretations of matters affecting labor according to the industrial, legislative, and judicial fields, and contains other information of benefit to the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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Write Your Senators And Congressmen to Repeal T-H Law

WHOLE NO. 2003 WILLIAM GREEN, *President* WASHINGTON, D. C., TUESDAY, AUGUST 30, 1949 GEORGE MEANY, *Secretary-Treasurer* VOL. 39, NO. 35

BLS Consumers' Price Index Off In July; Now Stands At Level 3% Below Year Ago

Washington.—Consumers prot t ed slightly from a continued moderate decline in prices of retail goods and services, according to reports released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The bureau's consumers' price index dropped .3 percent in the month ending July 15 to a level 2 percent lower than a year ago.

Chiefly responsible for the decline was a drop of 1.3 percent in food prices, the bureau said.

On July 15, the index stood at 168.5 percent of the 1935-39 average, 26.4 percent higher than in June, 1946, and 70.9 percent above the level of August, 1939.

Over the past year, food prices have led the way in the downward trend. The food price index, at 201.7 percent of the 1935-39 average, was 7 percent under a year ago. Despite this drop, the index is still 36.5 percent over the June, 1946, level.

Biggest factors in the drop in food prices during the month were a decline of 3.6 percent for fruits and vegetables and a contra-seasonal drop of 1.9 percent for meats, poultry and fish. Fats and oils prices declined 1.2 percent and prices of sugar and sweets and cereals and bakery products averaged fractionally lower than a month earlier.

Prices of most fresh fruits and vegetables declined, with decreases of 20 percent for apples, 10 percent for potatoes, and 9 percent for onions. Prices of all cuts of beef, veal, lamb and fresh pork were lower, with reductions of 7 percent for pork chops and almost 5 percent for leg of lamb. Prices of canned salmon declined about 3½ percent.

Apparel prices dropped .9 percent from June 15 to July 15, the ninth consecutive monthly decline. They were 6.5 percent below the October, 1948, peak. Lower prices were reported for women's nylon hose, rayon slips and rayon and cotton street dresses and men's business shirts and wool suits.

Prices of housefurnishings continued the downward trend which has persisted since October, 1948, and on July 15 were 2 percent lower than a month earlier. The decline during the month was mainly due to lower prices for electric washing machines, gas ranges and mops.

Residential rents rose fractionally (.1 percent) in the month to July 15. From April to July, rents showed an increase in every city surveyed in the 11 cities surveyed in both months, with the largest increases in Minneapolis, Kansas City and Manchester.

Prices of miscellaneous goods and services averaged fractionally higher than a month earlier. Increases in bus fares in Indianapolis, Portland, Ore., and Richmond and slightly increased prices for some commodities more than offset lower prices for toilet goods and toilet soap, household paper and automobile tires.

Farm Union Hits Move To Import Labor; Says 50,000 U. S. Workers Jobless In Calif.

San Francisco.—The AFL's National Farm Labor Union is fighting against the contract executed Aug. 1 between the United States and Mexico to allow the entry of up to 35,000 Mexican nationals into the United States as farm laborers.

Ernesto Galarza, Mexican-born director of organizing education for the organization of some 10,000 farm workers, declared the AFL was ready as a last-resort "to stand guard over the big corporate farmers in the state that no contract nationals go to work there."

The organization is carrying on a campaign to inform its members and other farm workers what the union considers a few simple facts, chief among which is that there are now about 50,000 unemployed farm workers in California.

"No more farm laborers will be needed to pick the coming cotton crop, but the State Department and the United States Employment Service have refused to terminate this farce apparently because the Washington pressure of the Associated Farmers is irritating," Mr. Galarza said.

"The farmers want more Mexicans, the union asserts, because they will not be paid but rather because they will flood the farm labor markets and depress the wage scale and because the Mexicans are contract non-organizers.

Petitions now being circulated among all shades of California farm workers, including Mexicans, have gathered 7,000 signatures opposing the new immigration, which is scheduled to start early next month, the union said. President Truman has been asked to cancel the agreement.

Green Sees Labor's Program Insurance Against Depression

Volume of New Unemployment Declines; Government Aid Set For Critical Areas

Washington.—The government released a more optimistic report on the general unemployment situation and announced further plans to combat joblessness in 21 of the most critical areas in the nation.

Robert C. Goodwin, director of the Bureau of Employment Security, reported that the volume of new unemployment claims received by the state unemployment insurance laws has dropped sharply in recent weeks and is now at the lowest level since last November.

Meanwhile, to assist those areas in which unemployment is considered most critical, the Department of Defense said it will provide business groups in the designated areas with full information on what the army, navy and air force plan to buy in the near future.

Secretary of Defense Johnson said the move is designed to mesh with President Truman's program to help depressed areas.

Reports from state employment security agencies to the Bureau of Employment Security, show that the initial claims indicating new unemployment declined to 259,207 during the week ending August 20, a drop of 31,693 from the previous week. Total initial claims, including 1,833 claims filed by veterans who had been filing under the Veterans' readjustment allowance program which expired for most veterans on July 25, were 266,740. These veterans' claims are not regarded as a true measurement as most of the veteran claimants have filed under the state unemployment insurance programs have been unemployed for some time.

"Initial claims indicating new unemployment have declined each week, except for a small rise during the week ending August 6, since mid-July," Goodwin said. "This is an encouraging sign as it indicates a steady slackening in the rate of new industrial lay-offs in recent weeks. The reports for the latest reporting week show that initial claims declined in 48 states. The states reporting a rise in initial claims, only one, Minnesota, with an increase of 600 claims, reported increases of 200 or more.

"Altogether an estimated 165,000 veterans have filed initial claims since ERA program was terminated for most veterans on July 25. The largest number filing in any week was 90,000. This last week the number of veterans filing initial claims under the state laws was 7,333."

Largest because of the filing of veterans' claims in recent weeks, continued insured rose during the last reporting week to 2,188,700, an increase of 24,200.

Secretary Johnson directed the Munitions Board, which supervises buying by the armed forces, to cooperate with Presidential Assistant John R. Steelman. Mr. Steelman is in charge of the 21 area plan.

The munitions board said it will conduct a study of plant capacities in 2 distressed areas—Muskegon, Mich., and New Bedford, Mass., to determine whether any items needed by the armed forces can be manufactured there.

The board said it will approve a general policy of awarding contracts to distressed areas, providing the bid from the area is as low as any from nondistressed areas.

Must Avoid Collapse To Foil Russian Aims, AFL Leader Says

Philadelphia.—AFL President William Green declared that labor's program for increasing purchasing power and providing security measures for jobless and sick is the best possible insurance against the recurrence of a depression.

In an address before the convention of the American Legion, Mr. Green urged support for labor's aims which he said have been blocked in Congress by "reactionary forces."

Warning that an economic collapse in the United States would play right into the hands of the men in the Kremlin, the AFL leader charged that opposition to organized labor's program "is the one certain way to promote the growth of Communism here."

Mr. Green said that the AFL, disappointed by the record of Congress following the election victory, had felt it would redouble its efforts to elect progressive members during the 1950 Congressional campaigns. He said:

"History proves that we can go backwards in America and that the forces of reaction are always in the American people. They are supremely loyal to the principles because they feel it is their government, a government with a purpose which sincerely seeks to promote the welfare of all the people.

In fighting for a progressive legislative program and in fighting for repeal of the vicious anti-labor features of such legislation as the Taft-Hartley Act, the organized labor of this country, who are your fellow-citizens and neighbors, have been done completely unmistakable verdict."

Mr. Green emphasized the soundness of the American economy must remain unimpaired in order to defeat the Communists who are "counting upon the corrupting influences of Fifth Column movements and the exhilarating effects of possible economic collapse to undermine the resistance and pave the way for their objective of world revolution."

Hailing the stand of the American Legion and the AFL that the war brutionally been the bitterest foes of Communism, Mr. Green said:

"I beg leave to claim some credit for the organization which I represent in bringing about the successful exposure of Communist hypocrisy among the workers of the world. Last year I told you about our fight against the so-called World Federation of Trade Unions, a Communist-dominated organization which was then trying to destroy the confidence of European workers in the Marshall Plan.

"Now I am happy and proud to report that this single-handed fight of the American Federation of Labor has won. The World Federation of Trade Unions has been thoroughly discredited by the Communist labor organizations, which had been used into playing it over our warnings, are now out. They exist in a body, but the free labor movements of 50 nations from every quarter of the globe are preparing to form a new and non-Communist federation of free world labor, to be created within a few weeks.

"This is a tremendous achievement, because this new organization, which the existing organizations of labor will proudly join, will be in a position to advance the labor program agenda all over the world and prevent Communist labor organizations subverting the free trade union movement. When you take into consideration the fact that the governments of many nations of Europe and South America are actually labor governments, and that many of their trade union movements into a solid and impregnable anti-Communist front attains real importance for the future of world peace and freedom.

"Because of these developments and the consequent isolation of Communist labor everywhere, except behind iron curtains, I feel confident now that the American people are prepared to pay the way for world revolution by first capturing the labor movement, which is doomed to failure."

Letter Carriers Win Round In Long Dispute With Dogs

By DAN SMYTH

Chicago Correspondent for AFL News Service

Springfield, Ill.—A legislative bill to make dog owners specifically liable for unreasonable attacks by their animals upon innocent persons has been signed into law by Gov. Adlai Stevenson.

It was sponsored by the National Association of Letter Carriers, Local 11, (AFL), representing 4,500 mailmen of the Chicago postoffice.

Fred Andrews, president of Local 11, visited Springfield during the General Assembly to urge passage of the measure. Chicago postmen have been annoyed for years by all sorts of mutts, both playful and vicious, who make it their business to sink their teeth into anyone who steps on their owners' porches.

Actually, dog owners always have been liable for damages caused by their animals, but, without a specific statute, dog owners have resisted settlement of claims or tried to negotiate for half. Andrews explained.

"It costs $25 just to start a suit," said the union leader. "If a mailman's trousers are torn, the claim is for $16, the price of a new pair. So, if the owner wouldn't admit liability, it was tough to collect.

"The new law is so specific, it should make it easier to press a claim. At least an injured mailman can resort to the dog's owner and show him how much chance he would have of escaping liability in court.

"It also makes the owner liable for the costs of bringing suit, shifting the burden of litigation off the mailman."

The new law provides:

"If a dog, without provocation, attacks or injures any persons who is peacefully conducting himself in any place where he may lawfully be, the owner of the dog is liable in damages to the person so attacked or injured . . ."

Milk drivers, laundry drivers, meter readers, and other AFL craftsmen who visit the homes of dog owners are protected as well as postal and letter carriers, Andrews pointed out.

John Stelle, attorney, postmaster general of Chicago, was another supporter of the bill.

"We've had a number of carriers bitten," said Haderlein, "and it's no fun when they have to undergo rabies treatments and lose work."

Haderlein said he has authority to withhold deliveries to home owners who fail to restrain vicious dogs, after warning.

Court Ruling Defending Home Workers Highlights Need For Greater Protection

Washington.—A proposal to exclude rural homeworkers from coverage of the Wage and Hour Act would have disastrous effects on the Labor Department's drive to eliminate the "sweatshop" wages, Secretary of Labor Maurice J. Tobin declared here.

Mr. Tobin said that a recent ruling handed by the United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the 4th district revealed the shockingly low wages paid by employers to homeworkers engaged in stringing tobacco bags. The court ruled that these workers were entitled to the minimum wage.

Enactment of the proposed amendment to the law would prevent the Labor Department bringing similar action in other cases to protect workers.

The court's ruling in favor of the 1,800 to 2,000 women workers involved pointed out that they had been paid "at a rate which brings them the ridiculously low wage of from 5 to 13 cents per hour for their labor."

The case was brought by William R. Boutwell, former chief of the Wage and Hour Division, against 2 tobacco manufacturers in Virginia and North Carolina.

In upholding the findings and rights of the homeworkers, said "there can be little question" that they "require the protection of the law and that the protection should be given them."

The fact that workers "are allowed to do the work in their own homes and away from the premises of those who employ them," was held by the court to be no reason for excluding "humble employees of this sort" who "are manifestly mere laborers compensated on a piece work basis" from the protection of the law.

NLRB Reports Reduction of Work Load; More Workers Choose Unions As Agent

Washington.—The National Labor Relations Board reported the following highlights in case activity during the month of July:

(1) At the end of July, 286 cases were pending decision by the board, as compared with 436 cases pending before it at the end of January of this year, a drop of 34 percent.

(2) During July, 29 formal complaints issued; 28 against employers and 1 against both employers and unions, representing a considerably greater number of complaints issued in any one month of this year, other than January.

(3) The all-out pending-case load for representation cases was reduced to the lowest level since December, 1946. A total of 1,047 such cases was pending at the end of July, 1949. This was a reduction of 5 percent from the 1,102 pending at the end of June.

(4) Of the 52,722 valid votes cast in elections during July, 27,782 or 52 percent, or 42,063, were cast in favor of representation for the unions participating in collective bargaining. This compares with 51 percent cast in favor of representation in June elections.

NEED FOR LABOR VOTE REVEALED BY SURVEY

Washington.—Workers must register and vote if they want truly representative Congress in 1950, AFL leaders declared.

The importance of registering and voting is pointed up by an informal survey made by a Congressman from a city district.

He checked the mail he received regarding the Taft-Hartley Act. Ninety-five percent of the letter-writers opposed Taft-Hartley. Only 5 percent were for it. But of the 95 percent who favored a change in the labor law, only 60 percent were registered voters. Forty percent were not.

However, of the 5 percent who favored T-H, more than 90 percent were registered voters.

It does no good for a trade unionist to oppose reactionary legislation if he can't do something about it on election day.

AFL TRANSIT MEN WIN

Rochester, N. Y.—The Rochester Transit Company and its employes' union signed a new contract providing for a 5-cent hourly pay increase. It affects about 1,600 members of the Amalgamated Association of Street-car, Electric Railway and Motor Coach Employes, AFL.

RESERVE BOARD PREDICTS INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT RISE

Washington. — Industrial production, which sagged in July, showed signs of improvement in the early days of August, the Federal Reserve Board reported.

In July, the board's seasonally adjusted index of industrial production declined 2 points to the 1935-39 average, from 169 percent in June and comparable with 186 in July, 1948.

According to the board, the July decline in production was a result of plant-wide vacations, mainly in non-durable lines, which currently are not allowed for in the board's index.

Preliminary information, indicates however, that the August rate may climb back to the level of June, at the 1948 average, the board says.

Higher steel productivity and increased output in the automobile manufacturing industry will play a big part in the anticipated August recovery, the board said.

AFL TEAMSTERS WIN GAINS

Pittsburgh.—Local 249, AFL Teamsters, and the Master Builders Association agreed to a 10-cent hourly wage increase. In addition, the union was granted concessions involving seniority and grievance machinery not in previous contracts.

INSURANCE PROTECTION EXTENDED BY AUTO UNION

Muskegon Heights, Mich.—The AFL Auto Workers' drive to bring its entire membership under health and accident insurance coverage advanced another step with the announcement that Local Union 644 included this protection in its new contract with the Shaw Box Crane and Hoist Division of the Manning, Maxwell & Moore Corporation.

The company will pay all premiums under the plan which provides the following coverage: $1,000 for accidental death or dismemberment; $25 a week in sick and accident benefits for 26 weeks; $8 a day up to 70 days for hospitalization; a $200 surgical schedule; $120 for hospital expense; doctor calls to the home, hospital, or office paid for at the rate of $5 per home and hospital call and $3 per office call; $25 for X-ray and laboratory fees.

IBEW WINS CONTRACT WITH CITY OF FLORA, ILL.

Flora, Ill.—The city of Flora has come to terms with union employes of the city utilities, ending a controversy that started last March.

Mayor L. E. Hall signed an agreement with the AFL International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers providing for retroactive pay of only 1 day the union won a city election on the question of collective bargaining for city employes.

The agreement also provides that neither city nor the union shall do anything to interfere with utility service.

In the special election there were 1,256 votes upholding the union's position that city workers could be union members, and 1,219 against it. Twenty municipal employes had walked out March 16, demanding union recognition.

ACCIDENTAL DEATH TOLL PUT AT 98,000 FOR 1948

Chicago.—Accidents caused 98,000 deaths, injured 18,300,000 persons, and cost the United States $14,000 a minute during the past year, the National Safety Council disclosed in the 1949 edition of its statistical yearbook.

The 1948 accidental death rate of 72 per 100,000 was the highest recorded in this country, although the lowest rate in the world for which figures are available, was exceeded by only 3 other countries, the council said. They were Austria, Egypt, and Iceland. Mexico's figures unavailable.

The cost of accidents in the United States last year was $7,400,000,000, or $500,000,000 more than 1947. Included were wage losses of more than $2,500,000,000, property damage of more than $2,100,000,000, fire losses of $750,000,000, and medical expenses of $1,000,000,000.

NO AGREEMENT REACHED IN GLASS INDUSTRY TALKS

Atlantic City, N. J.—A wage committee of the AFL's American Flint Glass Workers Union of North America and representatives of employer groups ended six weeks of conferences here without agreement on a new contract covering 25,000 workers.

In announcing that negotiations were concluded without agreement on the union's request for a 20-cents-an-hour increase for all workers in fifteen departments, Harry H. Cook, union president, said both sides agreed to ask for federal mediation.

Mr. Cook said that agreement was reached on some minor wage benefits but that both sides were far apart on major points. Pending mediation, it was agreed that the workers would continue under their present contract, which expires Sept. 1.

Work Stoppages Declined In July; Time Lost By Strikes Cut In Half

Washington.—Strike activity declined in July, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in releasing preliminary estimates for the month.

The number of new work stoppages was estimated at 500 as against 578 in June and 450 in May. About 110,000 workers were involved in stoppages in July whereas, in June, there were 215,000. The idleness in man-days of idleness in July was less than half the time lost in June.

No stoppages of nationwide or industrywide importance began in July, the bureau reported. In fact, no new strikes involved as many as 10,000 workers. The largest controversies were 2 stoppages which continued from June. These involved construction workers in Minneapolis and St. Paul, warehousemen employed by wholesale distributors of northern California, and lumber and timber workers in the tri-state area of Maryland, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Approximately 525 stoppages, involving 225,000 workers, were in effect during some part of July, counting those which continued from earlier months.

All known work stoppages, arising in labor-management disputes, involving 6 or more workers and continuing as long as a full day's work, are included in reports of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Figures on "workers involved" and "man-days idle" cover all workers made idle for as long as one shift in establishments directly involved in a stoppage. They do not measure the indirect or secondary effects on other establishments or industries whose employees are made idle as a result of material or service shortages.

Low British Pay Lagging Behind Prices, Productivity

By WILLIAM C. GAUSMANN

Labor Information Specialist, ECA Mission to Great Britain

London.—The average weekly wage of the British worker in building, transport, mining, utilities, national and local government employees, and manufacturing is approximately $23.50, the average hourly wage is approximately $0.60. In the United States the average wage is $54.65 in the manufacturing industries alone, the hourly wage average is $1.36. These British wage figures, furnished by the Ministry of Labor, are for October, 1948. They represent an increase over 1947. Taking June, 1947 as 100 the October figure stood at 106. June, 1949 estimates indicate a 2 percent increase.

The rate of wage increases slowed up following the government's White Paper on Personal Incomes, Prices and Profits of April, 1948. Again, taking June, 1947 as 100, wages rose to 105 between June, 1947 and March 31st. By June, 1948 this had risen to 106 and has risen only 3 points. From January, 1949 to June, 1949, estimate wages have increased only 2 points. The Trades Union Congress has also supported the government's stabilization program.

It can be confidently expected that at its annual congress in September of this year, TUC will repeat its endorsement of stabilization. What effect this will have, however, on the numerous claims for individual wage claims of individual unions cannot be safely predicted. Recent negotiations, however, would suggest that some wage increases can still be obtained by sufficiently strong union pressure.

Real wage gains for British workers have not kept pace with the rise in the cost of living. The index of retail prices has continued to rise. Taking March, 1947 as 100 the index stood at 109 in June, 1948, when the stabilization policy went into effect, as against a 5 point increase in wages. Since March, 1948 wages have risen 3 points while prices have advanced 5 points.

The sharpest price rise took place between April and May of this year, when a 2 point increase was recorded as a result of the budget cuts in purchase taxes. The government's decision to lower purchase taxes as of August, 1949 lowering the prices of utility clothing is expected to reduce the retail index by about 2 points.

Wages have not increased at the rate of labor output, either. In early August, 1949, Douglas Jay, Financial Secretary of the Treasury, revealed that productivity of British industry increased 6 percent between 1946-1948 and that by 1949 added that the labor force had increased by only 1 to 2 percent, making a net increase in output per man of 4 to 5 percent.

A recent release by the Central Office of Information contains the following analysis:

"British industrial production is now nearly 50 percent above prewar levels—nearly 30 per cent above the average for 1946-47 and 10 percent on average 6½ percent above same period 1948, figure for fifth month—May—showed rise of more than 9 percent on 48 compared 8 percent increase January.

"This current increase in output of industrial goods is not due to seasonal fluctuations in employment so far this year, it corresponds roughly to increase in productivity. What is more satisfactory is that increase in industry respectively this means that individual British worker is now recording output 9 percent greater than at start of year."

Farm Union Hits Move To Import Labor; Says 50,000 U. S. Workers Jobless In Calif.

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